



# **Beginner's Guide to Postgraduate Study in the USA**

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# **APPLYING TO AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY**

## **AMERICAN POSTGRADUATE DEGREES:**

The postgraduate, also known as **graduate**, degrees offered are the Master's and Ph.D. All degrees include taught courses and research. Class participation, research papers and examinations are all important. Degree requirements are stated in terms of 'credits' (sometimes called units or hours) and each taught course usually earns 3-4 credits. A student will usually accumulate 24 credits per academic year if the university operates on a traditional two-semester system.

**Academic Master's degrees** usually require the completion of 30-36 credits and could reasonably be completed in one or two academic year(s). Often a degree will include a thesis option for 6-9 credits. Some institutions are only interested in potential doctoral candidates, although they will usually award a terminal Master's to students who complete a certain level of coursework but do not go onto their doctoral work.

**Professional Master's degrees** (designed to lead the student from the first degree to a particular profession) include business administration, journalism, social work, international relations and urban planning. They are structured, usually require completion of 36-48 units and are unlikely to include a thesis option. These degrees do not require a first degree in a particular field, although in some cases they may require a certain amount of study in a particular field. It is very difficult to complete professional degrees in one year.

**Ph.D's** require at least 3 years beyond the Bachelor's, but are rarely completed in less than 5 or 6 years as most students take on teaching or research assignments during their studies. Students are required to complete 2 years of coursework culminating in oral and written qualifying exams (called preliminary exams) before being admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. and embarking on dissertation research. Students may also have to complete certain foreign language requirements at this time. A dissertation (300-400 typed pages) of publishable quality work is then required. Thereafter an oral exam or 'defense' completes the degree.

## **NON-DEGREE STATUS:**

- **Special Student status/Non-degree status** is given to students who want to study at the postgraduate level for a semester or a year, but do not wish to complete a degree. Students are treated like first-year postgraduate students and will receive credits for their coursework, but no degree. As most universities do not have a formal Special Student admissions process, contact the university department to ask about Special

Student possibilities and admissions procedures.

- **Visiting Fellow** status is given to advanced doctoral candidates who have completed all coursework and who wish to pursue dissertation research at an American university, or for scholars who have a doctorate and would like to pursue further research in their field. Contact the university department to determine procedures.

#### **ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS:**

Students from South Africa should hold a 4-year university degree, or a 3-year degree with Honors or HED diploma. Applicants with professional qualifications are considered on an individual basis.

#### **WHEN TO APPLY:**

You should begin preparing your applications ideally 12 months prior to admission. (See the [Time Schedule for Applying to US Universities](#).) Most university deadlines fall between January-March, but some can be as early as 30th November. Late applications are usually not considered. Some universities allow students to begin in January rather than the usual starting time of August/September. Remember that the later you apply, the narrower the choice of degree programs will be.

## **Beginner's Guide to Postgraduate Study in the USA:**

# **HOW TO APPLY**

### **STEP 1 – Choosing Where to Apply**

#### **Application Strategy:**

Most students apply to between three and seven universities. Applying only to one or two can be risky in case you are not accepted or no funding is available, while applying to more will create a heavy workload. Some people prefer to apply to all competitive schools, while others prefer to apply to a mix of more competitive schools and safer schools as they feel this will give them a greater chance of acceptance.

#### **Academic Considerations:**

- a) Identify schools which offer your subject and your specialization(s) using: subject lists produced by the US Educational Advisory Service (EAS); web based search; general and subject-specific directories available at EAS, at EAS Information Centers in South and some university careers services, including Peterson's Guide to Graduate Programs; and search software available at EAS.
- b) Identify the key departments or individuals in your field by: talking to your tutors and lecturers and their US contacts; talking to any US academics currently at your institution; reading journals and key books to spot 'movers and shakers' in your area of interest; using the web and electronic discussion groups; looking at rankings available – but remember these are subjective, unofficial and sometimes misleading or inaccurate.
- c) Contact the departments directly to discuss any academic questions you have and to establish relationships with those who will be reviewing your application and considering you for any funding available.

#### **Admission Difficulty:**

Be realistic about your chances of admission to a school. Most departments can tell you what percentage of applicants were accepted the previous year (figures also available in Peterson's Guide to Graduate Programs), which is a useful guide to the entry level. Also look at any minimum test score requirements, and discuss any concerns you have about your academic background with the department.

#### **Financial Considerations:**

- a) Each university sets its own tuition fees (see [Appendix I](#)). Generally, tuition for state universities ranges from \$4,000-\$13,000 and for private universities from \$8,000-\$27,000 for

one academic year (9 months). Living costs vary tremendously and are highest in the Northeast, the metropolitan areas and California. They can range between \$7,000 and \$15,000 per academic year.

b) University departments offer aid through scholarships or fellowships (can cover tuition and fees, living costs); teaching/research assistantships (can cover the above costs, and you are required to work within the department for up to 20 hours per week); or loans. Confirm that funding is available to international students. Some universities will only give funding after the first year of study. Note that financial aid deadlines can occasionally be earlier than the university application deadlines.

c) Funding is also available from bi-national exchange programs, foundations, corporations, governments, or private individuals (see [Appendix 2](#) for a sampling of funding awards). As the reasons for sponsoring awards vary between funding bodies, awards may be categorized by nationality, subject area, gender, degree level, intended university and even intended state. Awards may cover full costs (unusual) or a partial scholarship. Deadlines are usually earlier than university application deadlines, so start your research early.

### **Other Considerations:**

In choosing where you will be living for the next 1-6 years of your life, some other factors to consider are -

a) Location: climate in the US varies enormously, as do urban and rural settings. Some areas present more of a security risk than others do.

b) Size: US universities' enrolment size can vary from 200-50,000, with some resembling small cities. Large campuses may be located in rural settings or small towns where the students and the university dominate the local community, while small institutions may be found in densely populated urban areas.

c) Number of International Students: this varies from school to school and department to department. Do you feel a need to be with other international students?

d) Institutional Personality and Social Life: Some schools are founded with a certain mission, for example to provide a certain religious atmosphere on campus, or a single sex environment or a majority ethnic student population. Some schools are known as 'commuter schools' with a lot of part-time students who may not be around much of the time. The proportion of part-time students and faculty in a department versus full-time will affect the experience of international students who must be full-time students.

## **STEP TWO - Obtain Application Forms**

Write, fax, phone or preferably email the Director of Graduate Admissions at each university you are considering for the application form and prospectus (catalog). Also contact the Department for the department brochure. Give your name, address, nationality, qualifications, proposed major and ideal start date. Some American universities have applications on-line,

which can save you expensive international postal costs and lengthy waiting periods. This option may require a credit card.

### **STEP THREE - Register for the Appropriate Admissions Test**

Most US graduate programs require candidates to submit a score from a standardized test. The most common tests are:

Graduate Record Exam (GRE) General Test, Subject Tests and Writing Assessment: applicants to traditional arts and science courses. This is a computer-based exam and administered through Sylvan Prometric. They may be reached at (011) 7013 0600.

Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT): business school applicants. This is a computer-based exam and administered through Sylvan Prometric. They may be reached at (011) 7013 0600.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): applicants whose native language is not English. If English is not your native language, but you have graduated from a British university, you should request a TOEFL waiver from the US university. This is a computer-based exam and administered through Sylvan Prometric. They may be reached at (011) 7013 0600.

Test of Spoken English (TSE): applicants who are requesting a TA position are usually required to take the TSE. This is not a computer-based exam and information and registration may be acquired from EAS.

### **STEP FOUR - Return the Application Forms**

Read the information carefully. Incomplete applications will delay the process. It is your responsibility to ensure all documents arrive in time. EAS staff can review your application essays with you (3 days notice required).

You should be aware of the costs involved in the application process:

- Costs of catalogues: \$5 to \$15 approx.
- Non-refundable application fee paid to university: \$30 to \$100
- Test application fees: range from \$100 (TOEFL) to \$210 (GMAT)

Colleges usually notify their applicants between April and June. Note the deadlines by which you have to reply if you are accepted. If you are accepted by more than one institution, write to the one you decide to accept (pay a deposit if required) and also write to those whose offers you wish to decline.

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# **VISAS**

Most international students will enter the US on a non-immigrant student visa. To qualify for a visa, you must have proof of university acceptance for full-time study. Once you accept the university offer and show proof of sufficient funding, the university will send you either an I-20 or an IAP-66 government document, which proves university acceptance. You can then apply for your visa - either an F-1 or a J-1, respectively. South African citizens may be required to return to their home country in order to apply for a visa to the US if applying outside of South Africa.

You should phone the United States Consulate nearest you to confirm visa days, hours and current costs.

# **GETTING READY TO GO**

Contact your local Educational Advising Center (EAS) for information regarding a pre-departure program.

If one will not be available close to the time of your departure, request that the booklet entitled “A Few Things You Should Know Before You Go” be sent to you. It contains vital information regarding your stay in the United States.



## **Beginner's Guide to Postgraduate Study in the USA:**

# **TIME SCHEDULE FOR APPLYING TO AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES (PROSPECTIVE POSTGRADUATES)**

This is the recommended timescale for applying to universities but it is often the case that students complete the process in a much shorter time period.

### **18 Months Prior**

- assess reasons and rationale behind wanting to study in the US to see if it is right for your career goals
- obtain a list of universities offering your subject area and consult your tutors about appropriate institutions/contacts
- attend the 'Success in the US' seminar held in May and September by EAS (See [Events](#))
- consider financial aid needs
- investigate application/financial aid deadlines (this will affect when to take the necessary admissions tests)

### **12 Months Prior**

- write to universities for catalogues, course application forms and financial aid information
- obtain registration forms and information on relevant standardized tests and register to sit the exams
- write to funding bodies for information and application forms
- develop list of items required and deadlines for both funding and university applications
- prepare for the appropriate standardized test using preparation books and software (available from EAS - see [Publications](#))
- request university transcripts from your university
- request references

- draft statements of purpose
- submit complete applications to universities and funding bodies by deadlines
- begin to consider housing options
- double-check that transcripts and references have been sent

**October - February** - main funding application deadlines

**January - April** - university application deadlines

**April - June** - acceptances and rejections arrive

- decide which university to attend, notify them of your decision and complete and return any official forms
- send letters of regret to those universities you reject
- make sure that you will have adequate funds for travel, registration and living costs upon your arrival
- apply for any travel-only awards or “top-up” awards from funding bodies
- organize housing
- investigate the medical insurance plan available from the university
- notify your sponsoring organization of your plans (if applicable)
- **purchase a copy of EAS’s guide to living and studying in the US, “*A Few Things You Should Know Before You Go*”, which is published in June for students going to the US in August**

**June – August**

- apply for visa upon receipt of I-20 or IAP-66
- make travel arrangements
- contact the university International Student Office with details of arrival plans
- obtain a copy of your medical record, regular prescriptions, etc.
- plan to arrive in time for the university orientation session
- if needed, organize to be met at port of entry

## **Beginner's Guide to Postgraduate Study in the USA:**

# **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT POSTGRADUATE ADMISSIONS**

Can I get a postgraduate degree from a US university just by doing independent research?

How do I find out which are the good universities for my subject?

Can I do a postgraduate degree in a field unrelated to my undergraduate degree?

What are the GRE General and GRE Subject Tests? How do I register for them?

How important is the GRE and how well do I have to do?

What are my chances of getting financial aid?

What are my chances of being fully funded by a university?

What if I have missed the university deadline?

Is it possible to start my degree in January?

Will my US qualifications be recognized in South Africa by employers and/or universities?

How can I get further information about US universities if it is difficult for me to come to South Africa?

**Can I get a postgraduate degree from a US university just by doing independent research?**

No. Master's and Ph.D's in the US require you to complete at least 1-2 years of taught coursework before pursuing independent research. If you just want to do independent research then consider applying as a non-degree student or visiting scholar.

**How do I find out which are the good universities for my subject?**

A good university will offer you the degree program you want with courses, facilities, faculty and funding that can support and develop your research interests. With over 1,700 universities offering postgraduate degrees there are probably dozens of 'good' programs in your field - many you are unlikely to have heard of before. There is no official ranking of graduate schools in the US although unofficial rankings for a number of subjects are published and some can be viewed at the EAS reference library and may be available online. These unofficial rankings usually shed little light on the typical graduate student experience at the university and a wise student does not use rankings as a shortcut to doing thorough research into suitable programs. A more reliable source of information and advice will be your professors and students who have studied in the States. You will also find that universities and their faculty members are mentioned in academic articles and professional journals that you read and these can be a good way to find out who is leading the field in your subject area. Internet and email access also makes it easy to research postgraduate programs and to contact professors and current graduate students in the US. You should apply to the graduate programs that best fit your needs.

**Can I do a postgraduate degree in a field unrelated to my undergraduate degree?**

You should check with individual university departments to see whether they will consider applications from people without an undergraduate degree in the relevant field. If exceptions are made you may be asked to complete some key undergraduate courses in the subject first before being admitted into the graduate level courses. For professional degrees in subjects such as business (MBA), education or hotel management, prior study of the subject is not usually required but relevant work experience is important.

### **What are the GRE General and GRE Subject Tests? How do I register for them?**

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test is a 3 - 4 hour, multiple choice aptitude test. The test assesses verbal reasoning, analytical skills and quantitative ability and is required by the majority of graduate schools for arts and science subjects. Some universities also require a subject test to be taken in your proposed area of study, e.g. literature, computer science, etc. Only take the Subject Test if your prospective university requires it. A registration bulletin which covers the general and subject tests can be obtained from EAS either personally or via the post.

The GRE general test is only available in South Africa on computer. The **computer-based test** is adaptive, which means that test takers will receive weighted, harder or easier questions depending upon how they are performing on the test. The test is now offered all year round in South Africa at various testing sites. Contact Sylvan Prometric at (011) 713 0600. Plan to be at the center for up to four and half-hours. The postal registration deadline is three weeks in advance, fax one week and telephone registrations must be made at least two business days prior to your requested testing date.

From October 1999 the GRE Writing Assessment will be offered as an optional test independently of the GRE General and Subject Tests. It consists of 2 analytical writing tasks, which are designed to let you demonstrate your critical thinking skills and analytical writing skills. You should check with the individual graduate programs as to whether you would need to sit this test. Further details are in the GRE bulletin or on the GRE Web site.

GRE subject tests are only available as paper-based tests and WILL be offered in South Africa in limited locations three times during the year. Because of limited testing dates those students who need to take them should plan well in advance.

Preparation aids for the GRE general test are available at EAS, including test preparation books for sale or reference use as well as software which simulates the GRE computer-adaptive test conditions either for sale or for use in the Advising Center.

### **How important is the GRE and how well do I have to do?**

Graduate schools in the US very rarely demand a certain score in the test and few universities will reject an applicant for a poor GRE score alone. As a general rule GRE scores will be examined within the context of the entire application, so that your performance on the GRE becomes less important the better the other elements of your application, i.e. classification of your undergraduate degree, academic/professional references and written statement of purpose. The different sections of the test will also vary in importance depending on the

subject area for which you are applying, so for example scores on the maths section of the test will be less important for English literature students than for economics students.

### **What are my chances of getting financial aid?**

This will depend on your subject area and where you plan to apply, as it is to the universities that you must realistically look for funding. In 1997-98, 36% of international students at the postgraduate level received their primary funding from the institution in which they were enrolled. Of the remainder the majority were self-financed, while a small percentage were the recipients of independent awards such as the Fulbright Awards. The EAS reference library has a number of directories on independent funding organizations. **The Directory of Graduate Programs** and the **Peterson's Guides to Graduate Study**, available for reference at EAS, indicate which university departments offer financial aid to postgraduate students. Peterson's Web site, at [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com), also contains similar information.

### **What are my chances of being fully funded by a university?**

This will depend on the university department as funding levels differ from department to department. Financial aid does not always cover full costs so you should apply to other sources of assistance as well. First year students are less likely to receive assistance, and a few universities may restrict their funding to US citizens and residents. There are three main forms of university financial aid available. The first is a **teaching assistantship**. For 20 hours a week you may help a professor with lectures, lead class discussions, grade exam papers or teach undergraduates. The second is a **research assistantship** whereby a student will help with departmental or professorial research projects. An assistantship will typically cover the cost of tuition and fees for a year and may include a stipend for living expenses. The third form is a **fellowship, which** is normally awarded to students admitted onto Ph.D. programs. They entail no work responsibilities and may cover the cost of tuition and fees plus a stipend. Full fellowship support for the duration of a program is rare and will generally be combined with an assistantship. All aid is awarded on a year-by-year basis but should be forthcoming if the minimum GPA is maintained. Occasionally university scholarships may be available for postgraduate students.

### **What is a 'transcript'? How do I get one?**

A transcript is a record of all the courses you have taken as an undergraduate student, showing exam marks and, if continually assessed grades on coursework. The Registrar's Office at your college will issue transcripts and you will need enough 'official' copies of your transcript for all the universities to which you are applying. A key to the grading system used should be included.

### **How important is my degree classification when applying?**

US graduate programs usually state the minimum academic admission requirements as a Grade Point Average (GPA) which is a numeric equivalent of the grades that a student has achieved throughout his or her academic career.

### **Will I need to take the TOEFL if English is not my native language?**

If you have completed your degree in an English-speaking country, then usually the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) will be waived upon request. However, if most of your coursework is quantitative and you are not writing essays, you may wish to submit a TOEFL score to strengthen your application, particularly if you are applying for a teaching assistantship.

### **What if I have missed the university deadline?**

US university departments, particularly competitive ones, receive hundreds or even thousands of applications, so deadlines are firm and you will need to ensure that the application form, test results and recommendations have reached the university before the required date. Some courses, however, particularly MBA programs, may indicate that they operate rolling admissions. This means that the admissions committee meets several times a year and will accept applications after a specified deadline date. Nevertheless, early application is advisable. A priority date for admissions indicates that priority will be given to those submitting applications by that date, but later applications will be considered if space is available.

### **Is it possible to start my degree in January?**

Some universities will allow students to commence in January instead of August/September. Consult the prospectus for the application deadline. You should be aware, however, that the department's financial aid package is largely distributed at the beginning of the fall semester so there may be less chance of you obtaining an assistantship if you start in January.

### **Will my US qualifications be recognized in South Africa by employers and/or universities?**

There is no rule concerning the recognition of US degrees here in South Africa and evaluation is ultimately left to the South African employer or SA academic institution. Students who wish to study for a professional degree in the US, i.e. career-orientated, are advised to contact the relevant professional association here in South Africa first to find out what US qualifications will be recognized. It is very important to choose a US university that holds **regional accreditation** in the US, as this is one of the most important forms of university accreditation. The process of accreditation in the US is a voluntary one that provides for a minimum of standards at a university and includes an intensive self-study by the institution and an inspection by external examiners. The US government plays no role in this process. When students contemplate study through an American institution that is not regionally accredited, they are advised to check with academic institutions in their home country as to the recognition of such a degree. It is our understanding that many South African educational institutions and professional bodies may not consider graduates of an American institution that is not regionally accredited.

### **How can I get further information about US universities if it is difficult for me to come to EAS?**

- 1) If you have questions about the application process you are welcome to call EAS.
- 2) If you need to research university programs you may want to visit the EAS Center. These centers hold Peterson's annual guides to graduate study and other guides and directories. In addition, Regional Centers may have a set of US university prospectuses on CD-ROM.
- 3) There is a wealth of information on US postgraduate study on the Internet.

### **Beginner's Guide to Postgraduate Study in the USA**

# **FUNDING TO ATTEND GRADUATE SCHOOL IN THE UNITED STATES: AN UPDATE**

**Patricia Byrd**  
**Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia**

The information in this report was first presented at the OSEAS European Conference at La Grande Motte, France, on December 3, 1991. The report is based not only on my own experience in US higher education but also upon the information I have received from colleagues who work with the evaluation and training of international students to prepare them for graduate teaching assistantship (personal communication, K. Brown, J.C. Constantinides, and R. Smith).

## **Types of Graduate Assistantships**

Generally, graduate education in the US is financed through various types of assistantships rather than through full grants. That is, international students need to understand that funding will usually require significant amounts of work. Across the US, the following terms are used to designate basic types of graduate assistantships:

1. Graduate Research Assistant (GRAs)
2. Graduate Laboratory Assistants (GLAs)
3. Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) or ITAs (International Teaching Assistants)

In most instances, a GRA works for a faculty member to carry out that person's research projects. While such "research" might involve data collection or laboratory work, it might also be purely clerical, requiring typing and filing skills. GRAs can also be expected to do library-based research for faculty members, including the clerical tasks of picking up materials and returning them to the library. The work tasks are designed by the individual faculty member to fit her/his needs.

The work *laboratory* has multiple meanings in a US University. A GLA might be working in

the chemistry lab, but s/he might also be working in the language laboratory. The work might involve providing technical support for the lab's activities, but in some instances the GLA is actually a teacher, providing instruction for students in the lab section of a lecture class.

The "teaching" done by a GTA can run from team-teaching with other lab assistants in a physics lab to lecturing in management class. There are no institutional much less national standards for what tasks are assigned under this category; use of this term can change from department to department within the same university. The usual term now for international graduate teaching assistants is ITA although the term FTA (foreign teaching assistant) is also used.

In some institutions, the most highly sought position is that of Graduate Teaching Assistant with the students receiving higher pay. That situation can be reversed at other institutions, especially scientific or technical institutions that emphasize research over teaching.

While the standard is often unspoken, the graduate student's work week will more than likely be based on the US tradition of the 40-hour work week so that assistantships are thought of in terms of 10-hour blocks. For example, a research assistantship might require 10 hours of work each week while teaching assistantship might require approximately 20 hours each week. Such time estimations are in many cases wildly unrealistic. Just as productive faculty member seldom work only 40 hours each week so, too, graduate students can expect to see their work week expand to many additional hours to accommodate work, attending classes, and study to prepare both for work and for class. GTAs are expected to do whatever is necessary to be good teachers; GRAs are expected to do whatever necessary to complete the tasks that they are assigned. Graduate students and faculty will take some interest in the student's further academic career, providing advice, writing letters of recommendation, pointing out job opportunities, and so forth. Thus, the assistantships provide not just funding for graduate study but also academic contacts that can be important in the student's academic success.

## **Funds Involved**

Graduate assistantships can involve at least two basic types of funding:

1. Tuition reductions/waivers
2. Stipends

Assistantships can involve (1) tuition reductions/waivers with no stipend, (2) stipends with no reduction/waiver of tuition, or (3) stipends along with reduction or waiving of tuition.

A reduction in tuition might provide tuition at out-of-state rates to those charged residents of the state. Or some portion of the tuition might be waived. Stipends are different from institution to institution and from academic department to academic department, depending on the funding resources of the institution or of the individual department. Students must not assume that the funding provided at one institution is comparable to that at another even though the same terminology is being used.



### **English-proficiency Testing for International GTAs**

A variety of forces are at work to make changes in funding policy for international graduate students at US research universities. First, fewer US students are getting advanced degrees in science, technology, and business administration; thus, institutions are seeking international students for graduate programs in these areas. In addition, some institutions are beginning to require teaching experience for all doctoral students; students cannot get the degree if they do not teach. It is also true that there is better funding for assistants in science, technology, and business administration than in the social sciences, the humanities, and education. A fourth major factor is the dependence of US universities on GTAs to provide undergraduate instruction in many different areas, including required introductory courses in chemistry, mathematics, and statistics.

As a result of all of these issues, a large research institution is likely to have significant numbers of international students teaching its undergraduates. Many of these international students have limited ability to communicate in English beyond the confines of their particular academic specialties; few of the US undergraduates are skilled at communication with non-native speakers of English. The potential of this combination for cultural and academic misunderstanding has been richly realized in the complaints of students, parents, and state legislators about the “foreign teaching assistantship problem.” The concern on the part of students and parents has led to institutional and legal actions around the US.

Before a non-native speaker can be assigned to teach US undergraduates, s/he are very likely going to be required to pass an English proficiency test and to participate in a training program. Such testing is now required by state law or by institutional regulation in the following states (Thomas and Monsoon 1991):

## **I. State Law**

California

Florida

Illinois

Iowa

Minnesota

Missouri

North Dakota

Ohio

Oklahoma

Pennsylvania

South Carolina

Tennessee

Texas (Faculty included in addition to graduate students)

## **II. Institutional or University System Regulation**

Arizona

Georgia

Kansas

Michigan

Oregon

Wyoming

While these laws or regulations apply only to the state-funded institutions in that state, many private universities also have required testing and/or training.

## **Types of Testing**

Many institutions use the Test of Spoken English (TSE) or its institutional version the SPEAK. Specific information on these two tests is available through the Educational Testing Service. Many other institutions use either highly modified versions of the SPEAK or entirely different tests, including teaching simulations and/or oral interviews can be much more interactive than the familiar FSI, requiring role plays and teaching demonstrations.

## **Types of Training**

Generally, training programs for international GTAs will have the following three components:

1. US culture (academic and institutional rather than general)
2. Teaching skills (how to communicate with undergraduates at this institution)
3. Language skills
  - a. Improved speaking ability
  - b. Use of English in teaching

The training can be required for all GTAs (US and international), for international GTAs only, or for those international graduate students who did not pass the English proficiency test.

## **Timing of Training**

Students who are required to participate in a training program can expect great variety in the timing and the length of the training, which can run from four hours to four weeks to an entire semester (for courses that are taught along with the student's other graduate courses).

Training courses can occur before the beginning of the fall term, and thus prior to the beginning of the student's teaching assignment. Other training programs occur during the term (but before any teaching assignment) so that the student has some type of research or laboratory assistantship initially. Yet other training is given during the academic term at the same time that the ITA is already dealing with a teaching situation.

Some training programs are structured as non-degree courses that carry credit that counts toward the student's full-time load but does not count toward the graduate degree. Other training is non-credit.

## **Cost for Testing and Training**

Generally, the academic institution will pay for the cost of testing, although this isn't always done. Training costs are handled in at least these four ways:

1. Institution pays all (testing and training)
2. Institution pays for part (testing, training, but not ESL training for students with substantial difficulty)
3. Institution pays only for testing; students pays for training
4. Institution pays for nothing; student pays for everything

Upon arrival at the institution and participation in a testing program, some ITAs are found to have significant difficulties communicating in English. The student's dysfunctional English creates a very difficult situation for an institution and for the international graduate student if the student's funding is dependent on the award of a teaching assistantship. Most institutions will assign the student to some non-teaching duties for a specified length of time, often one academic year. At the end of that time, the student must either pass the English-proficiency test or his/her award will be cancelled. A very few institutions will cancel the award at the beginning of a student's program upon arrival in the US if the student does not pass the English-proficiency test. Funding to pay for needed ESL training is often the responsibility of the individual graduate student. In addition to the cost of such ESL training, such students will generally need to be in the US longer than they had planned in order to complete their graduate degrees.

## **Control of GRA Funding**

Awards, especially GRAs and GLAs but also GTAs are controlled at the departmental and even the professional level. In contrast to undergraduate education, where admission and

financial awards controlled at the institutional level, US graduate education is quite tightly controlled at the departmental and the college level. Potential graduate students should consider doing research into their discipline to find faculty members and departments that specially fit their own academic interests and preparation. For example, students can get information about the academic home of faculty member who publish in the major journals in their field. They can correspond with the faculty members, asking questions about their research and about the department's graduate programs. Students should realize that there are research universities in every state in the US and often two or three in each state with strong department's in particular fields of study. The best sign that a particular department has a strong faculty will be the publication by members that faculty in various journals and the participation of members of the faculty in sponsored international research projects. Savvy students will also get to know the US faculty who are visiting in their cities, for example, Fulbright scholars or AID program participants or advisers. Finally, the aware potential graduate student understands that all academic fields are not uniformly well funded. Students in the sciences, mathematics, business, and music will find funding much more easily than will students in the humanities, the social sciences, or education.

The situation is not much changed from when I myself sought funding to pursue my Ph.D. I was admitted to two universities, both of which had excellent English Departments and offered graduate teaching assistantships by both of them. Neither assistantships carried a tuition waiver or reduction. One was a private university with such high tuition that the assistantship did not cover the full amount, so I would have had to pay additional money for tuition and find money for living expenses. The other was a state university with much lower tuition; the assistantship covered the tuition and provided enough for me to live on if I was careful about my money. Thus, my choice was clear. What I did not know was that the assistantship was paid through the state's personnel rules which meant that I could not be on the payroll until I had actually presented myself to the university's personnel office and signed up; more importantly, I signed up too late to be paid for the first two months at the institution. I arrived in late August, started teaching in early September, and did not receive any pay until the end of October. I still have vivid memories of my panic until I discovered the short-term loan program that provided a low interest loan for tuition and living expenses until my assistantship actually began. Thus, I have added to the checklist below a question about the beginning date for receiving the funding.

In order to put some of this information into a format that can be used by overseas and potential graduates, the following checklist was developed to guide students in seeking funding and evaluating funding offers. The old saying is "not to look a gift horse in the mouth", but Trojans would have been better off if they had studied that horse more carefully because of the great variety in meanings possible behind the terms used to describe such funding.

Finally, I hope that the information in this report will be of use to advisers and to potential graduate students. Being a graduate student in a new country is stressful enough without having unpleasant surprises about the nature and limits of the funding provided to support that study.

## **Checklist for Potential Graduate Students**

### **I. Finding funding**

A. Be aware of the professional literature

B. Communicate directly with professors who are doing work similar to or of interest to the potential graduate student.

C. Be aware of professors who are working in their institutions/cities/countries (Fulbright, AID, etc.)

D. Be realistic about potential funding for certain professions

1. Top of the list: Physics, chemistry, biology
2. Music
3. Bottom of the list: Education, Humanities

E. Be aware of the importance of language skills, especially speaking, even for theoretical physicists

F. Develop good typing skills and knowledge of some word processing system (because of similarities between systems changing from one to another is usually not difficult)

### **II. Evaluation of offers of assistantships**

A. Exact terms of the offer

1. Tuition reduction/waiver: Is there a reduction in tuition? How much? How much remains to be paid?

Stipend: Is there a stipend? How well does it cover the cost of living in that particular location? Do I get the entire stipend amount or are some deductions taken out (social security or income tax, for example)? When is the stipend paid? {A student might compare the stipend to the cost of living figure used in the preparation of the I-20, but these figures are not always realistic.} Can I have the names and mailing addresses of other graduate students from my country who have similar assistantships so that I can get information from them about the costs of living in your city.

# **WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A PLACE AT A US UNIVERSITY BUT NO MONEY**

Congratulations on a successful application to a US university!

If you have only just begun to think about financing your studies then the following information provides some ideas on sources of funding for latecomers. You should be aware that the university will not be able to issue you with the form I-20 until you can prove that you have the money to pay for at least the first year of study. The I-20 is the essential form you need to apply for the F1 student visa at the US Embassy or Consulate. You will also need to submit proof of finances to the visa officials before they can issue a visa.

The bad news is that you should have applied for financial aid at the same time, if not earlier, as you had applied to universities. The good news, however, is that you still have some options left.

## **Costs**

First of all you should estimate the costs of attending the university: take into account tuition fees, realistic living expenses, travel to and from the US, health insurance, books, etc. Find out what money you can supply from personal resources and work out the shortfall.

## **Independent Foundations**

Unfortunately many of the deadlines for scholarships from independent foundations which would cover a substantial portion of the costs may have passed. Deadlines tend to fall 9 to 12 months in advance of the September in which you plan to enroll. There may be a few smaller awards whose deadlines may still be open. To find out if any scholarships are available you will need to do some research from the various funding directories. Guides such as Study Abroad, The Grants Register, Funding for US Study are available for reference use in the EAS library and may be in some university careers libraries or major public libraries.

## **World Wide Web**

The World Wide Web is also a good place to search for funding. Allow yourself a few hours/days as there is a wealth of information on the Web. **Funding From the US University** At this late stage you need to look to the US university department for funding. Aid, if available, is usually in the form of Graduate, Teaching or Research Assistantships. These involve students working for the department for up to 20 hours per week and payment is usually in the form of a tuition waiver (full or partial) and possibly a living allowance. The number of assistantships available varies from year to year and department to department.

## **Applying For Aid**

Once you have received written confirmation of your place at the university, contact the

department and enquire about assistantships. It is a good idea to let them know how pleased you are to be accepted but point out that you need help to cover the costs of the program. If you want to work with a particular professor at the department, contact him/her personally and enquire about possible assistantships.

It is often the case that the situation regarding funds for assistantships may change weekly. If you are turned down at first, keep in contact with the department and professors and keep asking about assistantships. Make a strong effort to obtain money from personal sources and inquire with banks in South Africa about loans (e.g. Career Development Loans or the Association of MBA loan scheme). If you are seen to be making an effort yourself then the department may look more favorably on your situation.

### **Other Options**

If you speak another foreign language fluently or are a talented musician/athlete/dancer, etc., find out if the university has departments that match your skills and ask if they need graduate assistants. They may be willing to provide an assistantship even if you are doing a program in another department.

Enquire with the housing office to see if they need any resident assistants (RAs). These positions provide free board and lodging in campus dorms in return for administrative/pastoral duties.

Seek sponsorship from business. The EAS knows of students who have received money from major corporations, merchant banks, etc. Using reference guides available at public libraries, develop a list of possible sponsors and write to them outlining details of the program and the costs involved. If you can, indicate how your studies in the US could benefit others - perhaps the local community or the company itself. If your research will be of benefit to certain areas of business or industry, then concentrate your search on appropriate companies. The EAS does not maintain a list of companies that look favorably on US-bound students, however use your initiative - you never know what you might find!

### **Finally**

When you have exhausted all possibilities and the situation remains unfavorable, consider deferring your place until the next academic year. Not all departments allow students to defer so you should check with the department about the possibility to do so. If the department agrees to your request, then use the available year to apply for the major scholarships, e.g. Rotary, Fulbright Awards, etc.; to build your savings; and acquire skills to assist your chances of getting an assistantship e.g. teaching practice, computer skills for research work etc. Keep in contact with the department during your deferred year to let them know that you are still interested in attending.

Instead of deferring, some departments ask that you re-submit your application for consideration for the next year. However, you do not usually need to fill out all the forms again and supply fresh transcripts, etc. Nevertheless keep in touch with the department during the year to let them know that you are still interested in the program. Let them know what you will be doing in your year out and build contacts with the faculty in the department. If your

GRE scores were weak the first time you applied then consider retaking the test and prepare well in advance. Sometimes GRE scores may be the deciding factor in awarding assistantships. Ensure that the scores reach the department before the relevant deadline date. Also consider applying to more graduate programs if you only applied to one or two with limited funding opportunities.



## **CREDENTIAL EVALUATORS**

Credential evaluation services exist to provide objective reports to help applicants determine the US equivalent of their foreign education credentials. Evaluations may be required by US employers, but are rarely required by US educational institutions. Credential evaluators' charge for their services. It should be noted that evaluation of foreign credentials differs from translation. While translation transfers a document from one language to another without interpretation, evaluation determines the role a document plays in the educational system of the country of origin and the equivalent role in the US educational system.

The National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) was created to unite various organizations engaged in the evaluation of foreign educational qualifications, to disseminate information on evaluation services, and to formulate and maintain ethical standards. Senior staff members of an evaluation service that is a NACES member meet certain minimum standards of professional competence and responsibility. The following organizations are NACES members:

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**Center for Applied Research Evaluation & Education, Inc.**

PO Box 20348

Long Beach, CA 90801

Tel: 562 430 1105

Fax: 562 430 1105

E-mail: [evalcaree@earthlink.net](mailto:evalcaree@earthlink.net)

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**Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc.**

PO Box 514070

Milwaukee, WI 53203-3470

Tel: 414 289 3400

Fax: 414 289 3411

E-mail: [eval@ece.org](mailto:eval@ece.org)

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**Education Evaluators International, Inc.**

PO Box 5397

Los Alamitos, CA 90720

Tel: 562 431 2187

Fax: 562 493 5021

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**Education International, Inc.**

29 Denton Road  
Wellesley, MA 02482  
Tel: 781 235 7425  
Fax: 781 235 6831  
E-mail: [edint@gis.net](mailto:edint@gis.net)

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**Educational Records Evaluation Service, Inc.**

777 Campus Commons Road, Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 95825-8309  
Tel: 916 565 7475  
Fax: 916 565 7476  
E-mail: [edu@eres.com](mailto:edu@eres.com)

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**Evaluation Service, Inc.**

PO Box 1455  
Albany, NY 12201  
Tel: 518 672 4522  
Fax: 518 672 4877  
E-mail: [esi@capital.net](mailto:esi@capital.net)

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**Foreign Academic Credentials Service, Inc.**

PO Box 400  
Glen Carbon, IL 62034  
Tel: 618 288 1661

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**The Foreign Educational Document Service**

P.O. Box 4091  
Stockton, CA 95204  
Tel: 209 948 6589

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**Foundation for International Services**

19015 North Creek Parkway, #103  
Bothell, WA 98011  
Tel: 425 487 2245  
Fax: 425 487 1989  
E-mail: [fis@mail.com](mailto:fis@mail.com)

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**International Consultants of Delaware, Inc.**

109 Barksdale Professional Center

Newark, DE 19711-3258

Tel: 302 737 8715

Fax: 302 737 8756

E-mail: [icd@icdel.com](mailto:icd@icdel.com)

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**International Education Research Foundation, Inc.**

P.O. Box 66940

Los Angeles, CA 90066

Tel: 310 390 6276

Fax: 310 397 7686

E-mail: [info@ierf.org](mailto:info@ierf.org)

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**Josef Silny & Associates, Inc. International Education Consultants**

P.O. Box 248233

Coral Gables, FL 33124

Tel: 305 666 0233

Fax: 305 666 4133

E-mail: [info@jsilny.com](mailto:info@jsilny.com)

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**SpanTran Educational Services, Inc.**

7211 Regency Square Blvd., #205

Houston, TX 77036-3197

Tel: 713 266 8805

Fax: 713 789 6022

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**World Education Services, Inc.**

P.O. Box 745

Old Chelsea Station

New York, NY 10113-0745

Tel: 212 966 6311 or 800 937 3895

Fax: 212 966 6395

E-Mail: [info@wes.org](mailto:info@wes.org)

# **HOW TO WRITE A SUCCESSFUL STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR GRADUATE SCHOOLS**

**Based on a presentation by PROFESSOR EDWARD HOWER\***

The personal statement is a difficult piece of writing, maybe the most difficult piece of writing you will ever do, and therefore you have to do it very carefully. It is an opportunity for you to give a picture of yourself. It may take a great deal of time and energy but at least you will have written something you are proud of, which says something important about you. So I would suggest first of all: write it for yourself as much as for graduate schools in America; do a job that you like, something that has integrity, which says something important about you. If things don't turn out the way you hope, at least you will have written something difficult but satisfying.

How important is the essay part of the application? This depends on your marks to a certain extent. If your marks are very high, then it may not be as important as it is for someone whose marks are not so good. Nevertheless it is important. A person with high marks can spoil his/her chances of admission with a bad essay. At highly competitive schools, where most applicants score at the 97th percentile level on standardized tests, a winning personal statement may be the deciding factor in admission.

## **WHAT ARE ADMISSIONS OFFICERS LOOKING FOR?**

First of all don't second-guess. Don't try to figure out what you think they want and supply it because you won't be able to do that. Nor can you understand the mind of a 50 year old American who is living 10,000 miles away from you and may have woken up that morning with a headache and then was bitten by a dog on his way to the office. There is no way you can second-guess; you cannot read their minds. Having said that, I can tell you some things which all college admissions officers want to see in the application:

### **A picture of your overall personality.**

How will you give a picture of your personality? I would suggest that you imply rather than state the facts. For instance, don't say 'I am a smart person.' Demonstrate it, imply it. Don't say 'I am energetic.' Give evidence by the fact that you worked after school for six hours every day and still had time to play on the volleyball team.

### **Academic background and work experience.**

It would be a mistake to talk about your high school. Start with your undergraduate career.

School records may be worth mentioning if there is something extraordinary about them.

**A connection between your background, your proposed study and your future goal.**

Admissions officers are looking for some continuity in what you have done, what you want to do in the near future and what you hope to do in the distant future. So, connect them.

**A sense of commitment and motivation.**

Rather than simply saying 'I am committed', find a way of inferring that you are indeed highly committed and motivated to your proposed field of study.

**Your ability to discuss thoughts clearly and intelligently in writing.**

They will be looking at your writing skills - how well you can present yourself clearly and intelligently when writing hence the importance of spending considerable time on the statement.

These five points are very general but almost every university wants to know about them. They may be too general but if you miss one of them you are probably missing something important.

**SOME GENERAL DO'S AND DON'TS:**

- Do take a lot of time. Don't do this at the last minute. Plan to spend a month or so preparing for the essay. Plan to let it rest for a week, so you have time to mull it over and get a perspective on it. Don't be hasty and sloppy.
- Do read the question carefully. If they ask you why you want to go to law school, answer that. If they ask what are your career goals, answer that. Don't go off on a tangent or get too verbose.
- Do write the length of essay they ask for. If they ask for 200 words give them that or 190 or 220. You don't give them a 1000 and you don't give them 50.
- Type your final draft unless they tell you not to. Type it well with no mistakes. Buy some good paper. If you're writing it, see that it is clear and legible.
- Do write a separate essay for each university that you are applying to. There is no reason why you can't take a paragraph from one essay and apply it to another. Your essays don't have to be every word different but each university would like to think that you are especially interested in their program. Each university is different. Make something about your essay distinctive to that university and mention its name. Don't write an all-purpose general essay. Admissions faculty don't like that.
- Do as much research on the university as you can. If you can get hold of a catalogue, read it. If you can find someone who went to the university, talk to him or her. Find out as much as you can about the university. You don't want to say 'I have always wanted to go to Harvard because I wanted to find out about the Great American West'. As most of you know, Harvard is not in the Great American West. It is in

Massachusetts.

- Don't try to second-guess admissions faculty, as I have already said, and don't flatter them. Don't say 'I've always wanted to study at the University of Montana because I have heard that it is the best university in the world to study medicine.' It may not be and even if it is, it sounds like flattery.
- Don't be phony. Be honest. Admissions faculty can spot a dishonest essay a mile away. It would not be to your advantage to be dishonest as you might get into a university and then find it was not the right place for you.
- Accentuate your positive qualities. If you had the highest mark in class, make sure that they know it. Make sure that they know that you were able to hold a full-time job while going to school. Make sure that they know that you won any awards. Make sure that they know that you were captain of a team.
- Don't glorify yourself. Don't say - 'I was the best tennis player in the whole city of Madras'. That is boasting. However being modest and subtle are also not good qualities. There is a medium between being modest and boastful.
- Mention your positive achievements as they apply to your graduate admission. The information you provide about your important achievements must be related to your field. If you are applying for medicine and you have won a poetry prize, don't mention your poetry prize because you may not have space. It is a good thing, but you may need to fill your application with more relevant information. On the other hand, you could mention your work as organizer of blood donation camps or your internships as a psychiatric care worker.
- Do not repeat materials that are already on the application. Don't say 'My major is Physics' because you have already said that somewhere else. Instead say 'While I majored in Physics I also took ...' or 'My Physics major enabled me to take special courses in... and...'. Do mention your knowledge and experience in the field at the university level. It is usually a poor idea to mention your high school experience unless something exceptional happened at that time that changed your life or affected your career choice.
- It is important to mention your work experience, or volunteer work that you may have done or extra-curricular activities if they relate to your field. For example, if you are going to apply to business school and you were on the basketball team you may think that it is not relevant. However if you learnt leadership qualities, if you learnt how to endure defeat, if you learnt management skills by being captain of the basketball team, then it is relevant. You have to show the relevance. If you had a job after school, working in the college bookstore or you have done volunteer work at a hospital, this is relevant - you have learnt management skills at the shop. You have learnt to interact with people while you worked in the hospital.

- Be definite in your application. Don't say - 'I hope to do this', 'I might like to do that'. Say 'I want to do this', 'I am planning to do this', 'I intend to do that'. Your language is definite. It is not hesitant and indecisive.

## **DO'S AND DON'TS ON HOW TO WRITE**

- Write simply, not in a flowery and complicated manner.
- Write in a straightforward way. In other words don't be subtle or cute. Write in a clear and logical manner. If you have to be creative, that is fine, but do so in a straightforward way. These people are really interested in your vocation. They don't want to read something that is in the form of one act plays nor do they want to read three adjectives per noun. They want you to be direct and straightforward.
- Be clear in what you are saying. Make sure you are logical. Explain yourself with great clarity. Finally, most important of all, be specific, not vague. Don't say - 'My grades were quite good' but say 'I belonged to the top 5% of my class'. Don't say - 'I am interested in sports'. Say 'I was captain of my hockey team'. Don't say 'I like poetry'. Say 'I did a study of Shakespeare's sonnets and wrote a twelve-page bachelor's degree dissertation on Imagery'. Don't say - 'I want to be a Supreme Court Judge, that is why I want to go to law school'. Say things like 'I was an apprentice in a court' or 'I often went with my father to the courts to listen to cases' or 'I wrote a legal column for a school newspaper'. That is being specific.

## **HOW DO YOU WRITE THE ESSAY?**

There are three stages:

1. PREPARATION
2. WRITING THE ESSAY
3. REVISION

### **Preparation**

Brainstorming is an important part of preparation. Take some time and write down in note form the important events and facts about your recent life - from the time you graduated from high school. List the things that you have done and the things that have been important to you. For example:

- Won a poetry contest
- Got A's in Physics and Mathematics
- Member of volleyball team
- Worked after school in shop
- Won a contest

- Worked with a social welfare group on a slum project
- Went to Hyderabad for six months to stay with an aunt because she was sick

Write out the answers to some questions. Write them out in some detail, being as specific as you can.

- What is special and impressive and unique about you? This is not an easy question to answer. You should ask someone 'Hey what is so special about me'. Your mother may not always have the same ideas you have: 'You eat well'. That's not going to help you figure out an answer. Ask a friend.
- What details in your life have shaped you and influenced your growth? What details in your life have made you the person you are and have influenced your choice of career goal?
- What have you learnt about your field that has stimulated you and given you the conviction that you are best suited to that field?
- How have you learned this?
- Classes
- Important reading
- Work experience
- Extra-curricular activities
- How have your work experiences contributed to your personal growth? If you have not had a job, don't worry about it, but mention it if you have - even if you were not paid for it. Perhaps you took care of neighbors' children for a number of years. If you are applying for graduate study in social work, psychology or education, you can make this relevant.
- What are your career goals? Be as specific as you can be. Not all students are clear about what they want to do ten years from now. If you don't know it, don't fake it. Be as specific as you can be. Not everyone can be clear - some students are not old enough or experienced enough to know what their future goals are.
- Explain any discrepancies or gaps in your record. If you dropped out of university for a year to take care of your father who was ill, that will show up in your student record or transcript. You will have to explain that. You don't have to make a big deal about it. However admissions faculty will want to know why you were not at university for a certain period. Suppose you had poor marks in the first two years and then your grades picked up and the reason you had poor marks is because you were not sure what you were doing or you were sick a lot or you were moving from one city to another. Explain that. For example, 'My marks in the first two years were not up to my



expectations but once I got settled into a new home, they improved remarkably' or 'My father was ill at that time and I had to take care of him. After his death, I had to face university again.' If such experiences have influenced your record you should mention them. Don't make silly excuses. But if something really needs explaining, don't skip over it.

- Have you overcome any special obstacles? Some of you may have faced troubled times in your life - financially, medically or have had family problems. If they are really obstacles explain how you have overcome them. This makes you appear like a person of considerable character.
- What personal characteristics do you have that will enhance your prospects for success in your field? Can you demonstrate that, give evidence? If you can't give evidence that you are a hard-working person then don't say you are hard working. If you are a hard-working person and you have worked ten hours a day at a job and studied, that is worth noting. Again inference may be the best way of stating it.
- What special skills do you possess? Ask your friends. You may have special skills in communication, articulation, or are you especially good at leadership, do you have sharp analytical skills, or are you creative. This is where your autobiography would be useful. You acted in a college play and people thought you were terrific. What does this mean in terms of applying to a graduate school of law? It means you are able to get people to pay attention to you. Being a good actor can make you a good lawyer. Actors have gone on to become lawyers and politicians as we all know, so look over your life. What special skills do you have? Perhaps you have a technical skill, a pilot's license or you know how to repair motors.
- What are the most compelling reasons the committee should be interested in you? What is so great, so wonderful about you? If you have done a good job with your autobiography and you have done a good job answering these questions half of your work is done. It takes time to do this. Spend time on it.

## **Writing the Essay**

Write several outlines and decide which you like best. Remember the essay has an introduction, a body and a conclusion. Outline the things you want to say and from all the material you have written, select the material that you think will go well in your essay. Select the most significant details. Put that into your outline. Make your outline useable, make it neat and leave lots of space. Now you are ready to write the essay. Write on lined paper, double-spaced, using only one side of the page.

The first attempt at writing the essay is going to be terrible, but don't worry; it is only the first draft. Do not edit as you write. Write it out. Make it too long.

## **Revision**

Let the essay sit for a day or two. Then go over it with a red ink pen making little lines; cross

out words or sentences. Revise it carefully and write your second draft. This may also be disappointing. Don't expect too much from your first attempts. It takes a lot of work. I have often put in a lot of work, put it in an envelope, taken one last look and said 'Oh hell, I have to do it again' and I did it again. Do as many drafts as you feel are necessary.

Spend time on the first paragraph. Make sure that first paragraph is terrific and interesting. Don't make it cute or flowery. Don't say anything less than fascinating. You won't get it on your first draft. You will probably get it on your sixth or seventh try. Also pay attention to your last paragraph which may be only one sentence - make it a snappy last sentence.

Be clear, specific and interesting.

You are likely to be exhausted, fed up and sick of the whole project. At that time don't push yourself. Let it sit. Give the essay to somebody else to look at. Someone who is older, perhaps a former teacher; not a friend who is afraid to criticize you. Somebody who cares enough to be critical and tell you the truth. Then write it again.

Once you think you have got the final draft, what do you do? Proofread it as if you were the editor of India Today or Times of India. Not a single mistake must survive - spelling or grammatical. Look every word up in the dictionary that you are not absolutely sure of.

Remember that content and style are both important (60%:40%). Make sure that the essay looks perfect.

*\*Professor Hower is a visiting professor from Cornell University, Department of English. He wrote this piece while he was in Madras.*

## **APPENDIX 1: POSTGRADUATE TUITION FEES AT US COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES**

The following list offers a selection of university fees to give you an indication of the cost variations. Unless indicated otherwise, the quoted fees are from the 1998/99 academic year. Those with an asterisk denote fees from 1997/98. Add 5% to get an indication of current tuition fees. You should also add \$6 000 - \$13 000 for living expenses to estimate the total costs for one academic year. **Please note that this is not a comprehensive list of colleges/universities in the US and you should always check with the university for confirmation of cost.**

**Under \$10,000 || \$10,000 - \$20,000 || Over \$20,000**

### **Under \$10 000**

#### **Alabama**

\$8280 Auburn University

\$7542 University of Alabama-Huntsville

#### **Alaska**

\$8514 University of Alaska-Fairbanks

#### **Arizona**

\$9110 Arizona State University

\$8710 University of Arizona

#### **Arkansas**

\$7422 Arkansas State University

\$9645 University of Arkansas-Fayetteville

#### **California**

\$6428 California State U-Chico

\$9405 Simpson College

**Florida**

\$5240 Jacksonville University

**Georgia**

\$8619 Georgia Southern University

**Hawaii**

\$9958 University of Hawaii-Manoa

**Idaho**

\$8676 University of Idaho

**Illinois**

\$8407 Illinois State University

\$8148 Southern Illinois U-Carbondale

**Indiana**

\$9558 Ball State University

\$7800 Indiana State University

**Iowa**

\$9532 Iowa State University

\$7999 University of Northern Iowa

**Kansas**

\$8416 Kansas State University

\$8261 Wichita State University

**Kentucky**

\$9156 University of Kentucky \$9090 University of Louisville

**Louisiana**

\$7411 Louisiana State University

\$8038 University of New Orleans

**Maine**

\$8630 University of New England

**Maryland**

\$9104 University of Baltimore

**Massachusetts**

\$6480 Salem State College

**Michigan**

\$9018 Wayne State University

**Mississippi**

\$6119 Mississippi State University

\$6155 University of Mississippi

**Montana**

\$7975 Montana State U-Billings

\$8507 University of Montana-Missoula

**Nebraska**

\$7062 University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Nevada**

\$8064 University of Nevada-Las Vegas

**New Jersey**

\$9641 Rutgers University\*

**New Mexico**

\$7848 New Mexico State University

\$8723 University of New Mexico

**New York**

\$7714 City U of New York-Queens College

\$9286 State U of New York- Buffalo

**North Carolina**

\$9104 U of North Carolina-Charlotte

**North Dakota**

\$7336 University of North Dakota

**Ohio**

\$7994 University of Akron

\$9600 Xavier University

**Oklahoma**

\$6509 Oklahoma State University

\$6591 University of Oklahoma

**Oregon**

\$9267 Oregon Institute of Technology

\$9228 Southern Oregon University

**Pennsylvania**

\$8640 Villanova University\*

**South Carolina**

\$8239 Univ. of South Carolina-Columbia

**South Dakota**

\$7100 University of South Dakota

**Tennessee**

\$8410 University of Tennessee-Knoxville

**Texas**

\$8750 Texas Wesleyan University

\$8808 University of Texas-Austin

**Utah**

\$7569 University of Utah

**Wyoming**

\$7906 University of Wyoming

## **\$10 000 - \$20 000**

### **California**

\$13 839 U of California-Los Angeles

\$15 792 University of San Francisco

\$17 322 University of Southern California

### **Colorado**

\$10 925 Colorado State University

\$14 652 University of Colorado-Boulder

### **Connecticut**

\$14 256 University of Connecticut

\$10 355 University of New Haven

### **Delaware**

\$12 120 University of Delaware\*

### **District of Columbia**

\$16 668 American University

\$19 326 Georgetown University

### **Florida**

\$12 270 Florida State University

\$14 757 University of Miami\*

### **Illinois**

\$11 550 DePaul University

\$11 712 University of Illinois-Chicago

### **Indiana**

\$11 033 Indiana University-Bloomington

\$11 784 Purdue University-West Lafayette

**Iowa**

\$15 520 Drake University

\$10 404 University of Iowa

**Maryland**

\$10 164 U of Maryland-College Park

**Massachusetts**

\$17 565 Suffolk University

\$11 874 U of Massachusetts-Amherst

**Michigan**

\$11 404 Michigan State University

**Minnesota**

\$10 555 U of Minnesota-Twin Cities

**Missouri**

\$12 470 St Louis University\*

\$12 274 University of Missouri-Columbia

**New Hampshire**

\$15 028 University of New Hampshire

**New York**

\$17 856 New York University

**North Carolina**

\$11 419 U of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

**Ohio**

\$18 400 Case Western University

**Oregon**

\$10 551 Oregon State University

\$10 812 University of Oregon



**Pennsylvania**

\$19 990 Bryn Mawr College\*

\$16 318 University of Pittsburgh

**Rhode Island**

\$10 590 University of Rhode Island\*

**Texas**

\$14 550 Rice University\*

\$17 660 Southern Methodist University\*

**Vermont**

\$18 640 University of Vermont

**Virginia**

\$12 240 George Mason University

\$15 814 University of Virginia

**Washington**

\$13 657 Washington State University

**Wisconsin**

\$11 160 Marquette University\*

\$15 190 University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Over \$20 000****California**

\$24 990 Stanford University

**Connecticut**

\$22 420 Yale University

**Georgia**

\$21 150 Emory University\*

**Indiana**

\$27 765 University of Notre Dame

**Louisiana**

\$23 024 Tulane University

**Maryland**

\$22 680 Johns Hopkins University

**Massachusetts**

\$22 600 Babson College

\$23 048 Boston University

\$22 028 Harvard University

\$24 050 Mass. Inst. of Technology

\$24 300 Tufts University

**Michigan**

\$20 484 U of Michigan-Ann Arbor

**Missouri**

\$22 220 Washington University

**New Hampshire**

\$23 790 Dartmouth College

**New Jersey**

\$23 500 Princeton University

**New York**

\$24 816 Columbia University

\$22 828 Cornell University

\$23 000 Vassar College

**North Carolina**

\$23 904 Duke University

**Pennsylvania**

\$21 405 Carnegie Mellon University

\$24 200 University of Pennsylvania

**Rhode Island**

\$23 026 Brown University

**Tennessee**

\$22 900 Vanderbilt University

Source: The International Student Handbook of US Colleges 1999

Peterson's Guide for Graduate & Professional Programs 1999

## **APPENDIX II: AWARDS FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY AND RESEARCH IN THE US**

The following organizations offer awards for postgraduate study and research in the US. The amount of the stipend and closing dates vary amongst the organizations and from year to year, therefore **STUDENTS MUST CONTACT THE INDIVIDUAL ORGANIZATION TO FIND OUT/ CONFIRM ALL DETAILS**. This is not an exhaustive list. Other possible sources of information for non-Americans include The Grants Register (Macmillan), Funding for US Study (IIE) and The Scholarship Handbook (The College Board), which are available for reference in the Educational Advisory Service (EAS) Library, university careers offices and larger public libraries. **For application forms please contact the associations directly.**

### **AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION**

INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIPS, AAUW Educational Foundation, c/o Customer Service Department, 2201 North Dodge Street, Dept. 141, Iowa City, IA 52243-4030, USA.

Telephone: 001 319 337 1716 ext. 141

Internet: <http://www.aauw.org>

**Postmark Deadline:** 15 December 1999.

**Eligibility:** Women who are not US citizens or residents and who have earned the equivalent of a US bachelor's degree.

International Fellowships support women for one year of graduate or postgraduate study at a U.S. accredited institution. No field restriction. Preference for candidates who demonstrate commitment to women and girls. One year fellowship is \$16,500. Possible second year home country project grant of \$5,000-\$7,000.

### **THE FULBRIGHT COMMISSION**

#### FULBRIGHT AWARDS

Program Inquiries, The Fulbright Commission, Phone: (012) 312 5104, Fax: (012) 3211586, Email: [Coetsee.R@educ.pwv.gov.za](mailto:Coetsee.R@educ.pwv.gov.za)

**Deadline:** 20 April of each year with applications normally becoming available in Mid-February of each year.

**Eligibility:** Applicant must be SA citizen/resident in South Africa; have, or expect to have at least a 3 year degree plus Honors or a four year degree and be able to demonstrate strong academic and leadership qualities.

12 awards (any field) and 10 MBA awards covering travel, maintenance and tuition fees for

one to two academic years at any accredited US institution. Scholars must return to South Africa for at least 2 years upon completion of the program.

**HOWARD HUGHES MEDICAL INSTITUTE**  
**HUGHES PREDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

Fellowship Office, TJ2041, 2101 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20418, USA.

Telephone: 001 202 334 2872 Fax: 001 202 334 3419

Email: [infofell@nas.edu](mailto:infofell@nas.edu) Internet: <http://fellowships.nas.edu>

**Deadline:** Early November 1999.

**Eligibility:** Open to both US and foreign citizens (non-US citizens must study in the US).

80 Fellowships for full-time study towards a Ph.D. or ScD degree in selected biological sciences. Awards are for up to 5 years of support. Fellowship awards provide an annual stipend of \$16,000 and a \$15,000 annual cost-of-education allowance. GRE score is required; GRE subject score strongly recommended. TOEFL required for foreign applicants whose primary language is not English.

**P.E.O. SISTERHOOD**

**P.E.O. INTERNATIONAL PEACE SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR WOMEN**

P.E.O. International Peace Scholarship Fund, P.E.O. Executive Office, 3700 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50312-2899, USA.

Telephone: 001 515 255 3153 Fax: 001 515 255 3820

**Deadline:** 15 December 1999 for completion of eligibility form.

**Eligibility:** An applicant must be qualified for admission to full-time graduate study, working towards a graduate degree in the college or university of **her** choice in the United States or Canada. Eligibility form must be completed before application materials can be sent to applicants.

The maximum grant awarded to a student is \$6,000 annually. Recipients may re-apply and receive the scholarship for a maximum of two years. "Believing that education is fundamental to world peace and understanding, members of the P.E.O. Sisterhood provide grants-in-aid for selected women from other countries for graduate study in the United States or Canada."

**Beginner's Guide to Postgraduate Study in the USA**

## **HOW TO REACH THE US EDUCATIONAL ADVISORY SERVICE (EAS)**

### **Educational Advising Library Opening Hours:**

Monday: 8:00 to 3:00pm

Tuesday and Wednesday: 8:00 to 1:30

### **Individual Appointments are available on:**

Monday: 8:00 to 3:00pm

Tuesday: 8:00 to 1:30

*NB. The EAS is closed on all SA and US public holidays.*

### **Physical Address:**

United States Consulate

2902 Durban Bay House

333 Smith Street,

Durban 4001

Phone: (031) 3044737

Fax: (031) 3042847